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On the Sunny Shore

by
HENRYK SIENKIEWICZ
Author of

"Quo Vadis"



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ON THE SUNNY SHORE.

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BY THE AUTHOR OF
QUO VADIS
(HENRY SIENKIEWICZ)

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Translated from the Polish by
S. C. DE SOISSONS

Author of "A Parisian in America," "Boston Artists," Etc.



NEW YORK
R. F. FENNO & COMPANY
9 AND 11 EAST 16TH STREET

TO MY
AUNT

Copyright, 1897

BY

R. F. FENNO & COMPANY

HENRY MORSE STEPHENS

On The Sunny Shore

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ON THE SUNNY SHORE.

CHAPTER I.

IN an open carriage the painter was sitting beside Pani Elzen; opposite them were her twins, Romulus and Remus. He was thinking about her and looking at the sea, and the scenery was worth looking at. They were driving from Nice to Monte Carlo, on the road called old Cornishe, which stretched along the rocky shore. To the left the view was stopped by high gray bare rocks; to the right the blue depth of the Mediterranean, apparently lying very low, looked like a boundless precipice. From the heights on which they were the small fishermen's boats looked

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like white spots, and in the far distance it was difficult to distinguish the sails from seamews flying near the water.

Pani Elzen was leaning on Swirski's shoulder; and was looking with her dreamy eyes on the mirror-like sea, and did not seem to realize what she was doing.

Swirski felt her contact, and a shiver of delight ran through him. He was thinking that if Romulus and Remus were not there he would encircle her waist and press her to his breast.

But in the meanwhile he was afraid that if he should do so he could not hesitate any longer, and would be obliged to propose.

At that moment Pani Elzen said:

“Will you stop the carriage, please?”

Swirski did so, and they were silent for awhile.

“What a calmness after the noise in Monte Carlo!” said the young widow.

“I hear only the music,” answered the painter. “It’s probable they are playing on board of an ironclad in Ville Franche.”

In fact, the same wind which bore the soft tones of the music from time to time brought the perfume of orange blossoms and heliotrope.

Beneath one could see the roofs of villas scattered on the shore, hidden in the thicket of eucalyptuis, and beside them large white spots formed by blossoming almonds and pink palms. Still lower there was seen the blue harbor of Ville Franche, flooded with sunlight, with swarms of large vessels.

The life seething beneath was in strange contrast with the silent deadness of the bare mountains, over which the transparent sky, without a cloud, was stretched. Here, amid those quiet rocks, everything grew small and disappeared. The car-

riage seemed to be some kind of bug, glued to the rocks.

“Here life ends entirely,” said Swirski, looking on the bare stones.

Pani Elzen leaned heavier on his shoulder and answered with sleepy voice:

“It seems to me it begins here.”

Swirski answered after awhile with a certain emotion:

“Maybe you are right.”

And he looked at her askance. Pani Elzen raised her eyes to his, but soon covered them with her eyelids, as if she was confused. Notwithstanding that opposite her were sitting the two boys, at that moment she looked like a young girl whose eyes cannot bear the first glimmering of love. Then they were both silent; only from below sounds of music were heard.

In the meanwhile, far out on the sea, near the entrance to the harbor, appeared a white cloud of smoke, and immediately

the quietness was disturbed by Remus, who, jumping from his seat, exclaimed:

“ *Tiens! le Fohmidable!*”

Pani Elzen looked angrily at her youngest twin. She regretted that moment, in which every word would decide her future.

“ Remus,” said she, “ *veux-tu te taire?*”

“ *Mais, maman c’est Fohmidable!*”

“ What a dreadful boy!”

“ *Pouhquoi?*”

“ He is stupid, but this time he is right,” said Romulus. “ We were in Ville Franche yesterday, and they told us that the whole squadron was here except the Formidable, which they expect to-day.”

To this Remus answered with a strong accentuation on the last syllable:

“ You are stupid yourself!”

They began to fight. Pani Elzen knew how much Swirski was disgusted with the way the boys were being brought

up and with their language. She ordered them to be quiet, and then said:

“I told you, as well as Mr. Kresowicz, that you mustn’t speak any other language than Polish.”

Kresowicz was a student from Zurich, and had consumption. Pani Elzen found him in Riviera and engaged him as a tutor for her children, after she met Swirski, and especially after the satirical remark of the rich Pan Wiadrowski, that “respectable houses do not educate children to be traveling salesmen!”

In the meanwhile the Formidable spoiled the humor of the impressive painter. After a time the carriage, rattling on the stones, moved further on.

“It is you who asked me to take them with us,” said Pani Elzen with a sweet voice. “You are too kind to them; but we must come here some moonlight night. Will you come?”

“Every time you wish me to,” answered Swirski. “There is no moon to-night and your dinner will be very late.”

“It’s true,” said Pani Elzen, “but will you tell me when it will be full moon? What a pity I didn’t ask you to dine with me alone. During the moonlight it must be charming here, although to-night my heart palpitates very much. If you could only know how it is throbbing just now! Look at my pulse; one can see it even through the glove.”

Here she showed her hand, clad in a very tidy glove, and offered it to Swirski. He took it in both his hands and looked.

“I can’t see it,” said he, “but I will be able to hear it.”

And bending his head, he put his ear on the buttons of the glove, pressed the hand very close to his face, then kissed it, and said:

“When I was a lad I used to catch

birds, and their hearts throbbed in exactly the same way. Your pulse is like a captive bird."

She smiled almost sadly and repeated:

"Like a captive bird?" After awhile she asked: "What did you do with the captive birds?"

"I was very much attached to them, but they always flew away."

"Bad birds!"

The painter spoke further with a certain emotion:

"It always happened that way in my life. I searched in vain for a bird which would like to remain with me; finally I lost even hope."

"No! You must keep that," answered Pani Elzen.

Here Swirski said to himself that, as this thing began so long ago, it must be finished as it will please God. In that moment he had the impression of a man

who stuffs his ears with his fingers and covers his eyes with his hands when he wishes to plunge; but he felt that it must be done, and that there was no time for reflections.

“Would you not prefer to take a walk?” he asked. “The carriage can follow us, and then we will have more freedom to talk.”

“Very well,” said Pani Elzen with determination.

Swirski touched the coachman with his stick, the carriage stopped, and they all alighted. Romulus and Remus rushed forward, throwing stones over the precipices, while Swirski and Pani Elzen remained behind. But evidently there was some ill-fate over them that day, for before they could take advantage of the moment they perceived a cavalier, followed by a groom, coming from Monaco stop where Romulus and Remus were.

“It is De Sinten,” said Pani Elzen impatiently.

“Yes, I recognize him.”

In fact, they noticed the head of a horse, and above it the horse-like face of the young De Sinten. He hesitated at approaching, but evidently thought that if they had wished to be alone they would not have taken the boys with them; so he jumped from his horse, and handing the reins to the groom, greeted them with a bow.

“Good-morning,” said Pani Elzen, a little dryly. “It’s your hour?”

“Yes. In the morning I shoot pigeons with Wilkisey; therefore I can’t ride, as it might disturb my pulse. I have seven pigeons more than he already. Do you know that the Formidable is coming to Ville Franche to-day, and that day after to-morrow the admiral gives a ball on board of her?”

“We have seen her coming in.”

“I was just going to Ville Franche to see an officer, a friend of mine, but it’s too late now. If you will permit, I will return with you to Monte Carlo.”

Pani Elzen assented by a nod of her head and they walked on together. Sinten, being a horseman by vocation, immediately began to talk about his hunter, which he had been riding.

“I purchased him from Waxdorf,” said he. “Waxdorf lost in *trente et quarante* and was in need of money. He played on *inverse* and he had met a series of six, but then the cards changed.” Then he turned to the horse, saying: “Pure Irish blood, and I bet my neck that there is no better hunter in the whole Cornishe, only he is difficult to mount.”

“Is he balky?” asked Swirski.

“Once on his back he is as gentle as a

child. He is already accustomed to me, but you could not mount him."

Swirski, who in the matter of sport was very vain, said:

"Why not?"

"Better not brag, at least not here on the precipice," exclaimed Pani Elzen.

But Swirski was already near the horse, and in the twinkling of an eye was sitting in the saddle, without any resistance whatever from the horse, which, though perhaps balky, thought it would be better not to cut any fancy capers on the precipice.

The horse and rider in a short gallop disappeared at a turn of the road.

"He is sitting quite well," said De Sinten, "but he will spoil my horse. Precisely speaking, there are no roads here for riding."

"Your horse proved to be very quiet," said Pani Elzen.

“I am very glad of it, because I was afraid there would be an accident.”

On his face, however, there was a look of embarrassment; in the first place, because what he said about difficulties while mounting the horse looked like a lie, and then there was a certain antipathy between him and Swirski.

It is true that De Sinten never had any serious plans in regard to Pani Elzen, but he preferred that nobody should interfere with those he had. Besides, a few days before there had been some bitter words exchanged between him and Swirski. Sinten, being an inveterate aristocrat, said once, during a dinner at Pani Elzen's hotel, that “according to his opinion the man begins with a baron.” To that Swirski, who was in bad humor, asked: “On which side?” The young man took this question very much to heart, and began to consult Pan Wiadrowski and Counselor

Kladzki as to how he should act. Then he learned, to his great astonishment, that Swirski had a princely crown in his coat-of-arms. The knowledge of Swirski's extraordinary strength and his skill in the use of pistols pacified the baron's nerves in such a way that the angry words left only a dislike in both hearts. And then, since Pani Elzen seemed to prefer Swirski, this dislike became purely platonic.

The painter, however, felt it the more of the two. Nobody thought that the whole affair would end in matrimony, but among acquaintances they began to talk about his sentiment for Pani Elzen. On his part he suspected that Sinten and his companions were laughing at him. It is true they did not betray themselves by even one word, but just the same Swirski thought so, and he resented it, principally for Pani Elzen's sake.

Therefore he was glad that, thanks to

the peaceful disposition of the horse, Sinten appeared to be a man who, even without any reason, would say things not true; so on his return he said:

“Very good horse, and he is good because he is as quiet as a lamb.”

Then he dismounted and they walked on together. Pani Elzen, in order to get rid of Sinten, began to talk about art, of which the young sportsman had not even the slightest idea. But he preferred to tell them the gossip of the gambling establishment, and he also congratulated her on the good luck she had had last night. She listened with constraint, being ashamed to be told before Swirski that she had participated in the game. Her embarrassment increased all the more when Romulus said:

“*Maman*, you told us that you should never gamble. Give each of us a louis for it, will you?”

She answered as if not talking to any one personally:

"I was looking for the Counselor Kladzki to invite him to dinner to-day; then we enjoyed a little game."

"Give each of us a louis," repeated Romulus.

"Or buy us a small roulette," added Remus.

"Don't tease me. Let us go to the carriage. *Au revoir*, Monsieur de Sinten."

"At seven?"

"At seven."

Then they separated, and after awhile Swirski again found himself sitting beside the beautiful widow; but this time they were occupying the front seat, because they wished to look at the sunset.

"They say that Monte Carlo is better sheltered than Mentone," said the widow; "but how it tires me!—this continual noise, the movement, and the acquaintances

which one must unwillingly make. Sometimes I wish I could run away from here and spend the rest of the winter in some quiet corner where I would see only people whom I wish to see. Which place do you like the best?"

"I like St. Raphael very much."

"Yes, but it is so far from Nice," she answered in a soft voice, "and you have your studio in Nice."

A moment of silence followed, then Pani Elzen asked again:

"How about Antibes?"

"That's true. I had almost forgotten Antibes."

"It's so near Nice. You must stay after dinner; then we can decide which will be the best place to go to."

He looked into the depth of her eyes and asked:

"Would you truly like to escape from the people?"

“Let us speak frankly,” she answered. “In your question I feel a doubt. You suspect that I am talking in order to show myself better, or at least less superficial than I am. You are right to think that way, for you see me in the whirlpool of society continually. But I will say that very often one follows a certain movement only for the reason that he is pushed in that direction against his will, and must bear the consequences of his previous life. As for me, maybe there is in me the feebleness of a woman, who, without somebody’s help, lacks energy?—granted. But it does not prevent me from longing very sincerely for some peaceful corner and quiet life. They may say what they please, but we are like climbing plants—when they can’t climb they crawl on the ground; therefore the people are very often mistaken in thinking that we crawl voluntarily. By this crawling I under-

stand merely an empty life without any higher thoughts. But how can I defend myself? Somebody asks his friend to be introduced to me, then he pays me a visit—the second, asks, and so on. What can I do? Refuse him? Why, no! Therefore I invite, but only for this reason, that the more people I have in my drawing-room the more they make themselves indifferent, and in that way nobody can get an exclusive position.”

“You are right in that,” said Swirski.

“You see, in that way there is created a stream of worldly life, of which I can’t get rid of by myself, and which often tires and disgusts me so much that I almost cry from weariness.”

“I believe you.”

“You ought to believe me; but you must believe this also—that I am better and less frivolous than I appear. When any doubts arise, or when people talk of

me, you must think that I possess some good qualities. If you will not think that way I shall be very unhappy."

"I give you my word that I always prefer to think the kindest of you."

"It ought to be so," she answered in a soft voice, "because, even if everything that is good in me were deadened, it would regenerate in your company. It depends so much with whom one lives. I would like to say something, but I am afraid."

"Tell me!"

"But you mustn't accuse me of exaltation or of anything worse, for I am not exalted. I am talking as a well-balanced woman, who states only that which exists though wondering a little at the fact. Well, then, with you I find my perverse soul all quiet and sunny, the same as when I was a young girl, although to-day I am an old woman. I am thirty-five years old."

Swirski looked at her with a beaming,

almost enamoured face; then he slowly raised her hand to his lips, after which he said:

“Ah! beside me you are still a young girl, for I am forty-eight—here is my picture!”

Having said this he pointed with his finger to the sunset.

And she looked toward that light, which was reflected in her radiant eyes; then she spoke softly, as to herself:

“Great, marvelous, dear sun!”

Then followed a silence, while a quiet red light fell on their faces. In fact, the great and marvelous sun was setting, and underneath it the light, transparent clouds shone like gold.

Near the shore the sea was plunged in shadow, but further out on the deep there was a great gleam, while beneath on the lilac background of the air the motionless cypresses were standing out.

CHAPTER II.

THE guests invited by Pani Elzen gathered in the Hôtel de Paris at seven o'clock in the evening. They had given her a separate dining-room, with a small drawing-room attached, in which the coffee was served after the dinner. The lady announced "an informal affair," but the men did not know what to think about it, and they came in evening dress and white cravats. She was dressed in a pale-pink low-cut dress, and looked quite young and fresh with her delicate face and small head that so enchanted Swirski. Her ample shoulders were white and transparent, like mother-of-pearl, while from her eyes beamed the happiness which she felt.

Among the guests, besides Swirski and De Sinten, were the old Counselor Kladz-

ki, with his nephew Zygmund, a young nobleman, not very polished, but audacious, whose eyes shone too brightly to suit Pani Elzen; Prince Walery Porzecki, a man forty years old, with a large face, bald head, and the pointed skull of an Aztec; Pan Wiadrowski, rich and malicious, owner of petroleum wells in Galicia, art lover and dilettante; and Kresowicz, a student and temporary tutor of Romulus and Remus. Pani Elzen had invited him because Swirski liked his fanatical face.

The young hostess had always wished, and now more than ever, to have, as she expressed it, "an intellectual salon." But in the beginning she could not turn the conversation from local gossip and incidents of the gambling house which Wiadrowski called "Slav," reasoning that there one could hear more Slav spoken than any other language. Wiadrowski spent

his time in Monte Carlo laughing at his own countrymen and other younger Slav brothers. It was his hobby; therefore he began to tell that two days ago he had seen in Cercle de la Méditerranée, at six o'clock in the morning, only seven people, and all were Slavs.

“We are born that way,” said he, turning to the hostess. “Other people count thus: Nine, ten, eleven, twelve, etc.; but every true Slav will say: Nine, ten, jack, queen, king. Yes! The cream of our society comes to Monte Carlo, and here one makes the cheese out of it.”

To that Prince Walery, with the pointed skull, pronounced, with the voice of a man who discovers unknown facts, that every abused passion is perilous, but that to Cercle de la Méditerranée belong many distinguished foreigners whose acquaintance is valuable and useful. One can serve one's country everywhere. Three

days ago he had met there an Englishman, Chamberlain's friend, and this Englishman asked him about Poland, and he, the prince, wrote him on a visiting card the political and economical situation in general and the social aspiration in particular. This card most assuredly will reach, if not Chamberlain's hands, because he is not here, at least Salisbury's, which will be still better. Probably they will meet Salisbury at the ball which the French admiral is going to give. During this ball the Formidable will be lighted *à giorno* with electricity.

Kresowicz, who was not only consumptive, but also a man who belonged to the red party, and hated the society in which, being the tutor of Romulus and Remus, he was obliged to live, began to laugh sneeringly, like a hyena, on hearing about the visiting card. Pani Elzen, not wishing to pay any attention to him, said:

“At any rate, people here do marvels. I hear that the whole way from Nice to Marseilles will be lighted by electricity.”

“The engineer Ducloz was preparing such a plan,” said Swirski, “but he died a couple of months ago. He was such an enthusiastic electrician that in his will he asked to have his tomb lighted with electricity.”

“On his tombstone,” said Wiadrowski, “he ought to have the inscription, ‘Eternal rest give him, O Lord, and may electricity light him for ages on ages. Amen!’”

But the old Counselor Kladzki scolded him for joking on serious things; then he attacked the whole Riviera. Everything here is pretext and *blague*, beginning with the people and ending with things. Everywhere one meets marquises, counts and viscounts, but one must look out that they do not steal the handkerchief from one’s

pocket. It is the same with comfort; in his office in Wieprzowski one could put five such small rooms as the one they give him in the hotel. The doctors sent him to Nice to get fresh air, and the Promenade des Anglais smells like a Jewish backyard—his nephew Zygmund can testify to it. But Zygmund's eyes were looking at Pani Elzen's shoulders, and he did not hear anything.

"You must go to Bordighieri," said Swirski. "The Italian dirt is artistic at least."

"But you are living in Nice, just the same."

"Because I can't find a studio on the other side of Ventimigli. But if I should change I would go to Antibes."

Here he looked at Pani Elzen, who smiled and dropped her eyes.

After a while, however, wishing to give to the conversation an artistic tendency,

she began to talk about Rumpelmayer's exhibition and about some new pictures which she had seen two days ago, and which the French journalist Krauss called *impressionistico-decadants*. Wiadrowski raised his voice and asked with the tone of Pyrron:

“Who are *decadants*, anyhow?”

“One might say,” answered Swirski, “that they are people who prefer the different sauces with which the art is served to the art itself.”

But the Prince Porzecki was vexed at Kladzki's opinion of marquises, counts and viscounts. “Even the rascals coming here belong to the higher species of rascals, and they are not satisfied with stealing a handkerchief. One can meet here great pirates. But besides these there come here the most refined and richest people, and it is very proper that high finances meet here high birth, because in

that way the world becomes polished! Pan Kladzki ought to read novels like 'Idylle Tragique,' and he would persuade himself that besides suspicious characters one meets here those of the highest social rank—such as will be met with on the Formidable."

They began to talk about "Idylle Tragique." Young Kladzki, speaking about the hero of that novel, made a remark that he was stupid in giving up a woman for a friend, and that he, Kladzki, would not do it—not for ten friends—but would for his own brother. Wiadrowski interrupted him, the French novels being his other hobby:

"What makes me very angry," said he, "is this selling of dyed foxes instead of natural ones. If those gentlemen are realists they must write the truth. Have they paid any attention to their heroines? The tragedy begins by the lady fighting

with herself and continuing to struggle most dreadfully through half the volume, and from the first page I know, so help me God, how it will end. How tedious it is, and how often it is repeated! I admit that fast women must be tolerated, and that they have certain rights to literature also, but they must not sell me a fast woman for a tragical princess, when I know that such souls have had lovers before the tragedy began and will have them after the tragedy ends. They will struggle again as before and everything will finish in the same way. What a falsehood, what an atrophy of moral sense and the sense of verity! And to think that in our country they read, that they receive as good merchandise and accept as if they were dramas those farces of boudoirs—and that they take them so seriously! In that way the difference between the honest woman and the fast woman diminishes; and the right

of citizenship is given to cuckoos which do not have their own nests. Then such a French gilding is put on our dolls, and they do anything under the flag of such authors! In such books there are neither principles, characters, sentiment of duty, nor moral sense—nothing but false aspirations — a psychological conundrum!”

Wiadrowski was too intelligent not to understand that in talking in that way he was throwing a stone at Pani Elzen; but he was a thoroughly malicious man, and he spoke thus on purpose. Pani Elzen listened to his words with considerable dissatisfaction, although there was much truth in his speech. Swirski was anxious to answer him sharply, but he understood it would not be proper to take Wiadrowski's words as if he had referred to some one personally; therefore he preferred to take up the whole matter from another point of view.

“As for me,” said he, “I have noticed that in French novels all women are sterile. Elsewhere, when two people are in love, in a legitimate or illegitimate way, the consequence of the love is a child, but here nobody has children. How strange it is! Because those gentlemen who write the novels think that the love can remain unpunished.”

“Such society! such literature!”, answered old Kladzki. “It is known that the population is diminishing in France. Among the higher classes a child is rare!”

“*Mais c’est plus commode et plus élégant,*” said Sinten.

But Kresowicz, who had before sneered, now said:

“It’s the literature of slothful people, and it must perish with them.”

“What do you say?” asked Sinten.

The student turned his passionate face

to him: "I say it's the literature of slothful people."

"Every class of people has its duty and its pleasures," said he. "I have two passions—politics and photography."

The dinner was almost ended, and a quarter of an hour later they all passed to the little salon, where the coffee was served. Pani Elzen lighted a thin cigarette, and leaning comfortably in an arm-chair, crossed her feet. It seemed to her that a certain nonchalance ought to please Swirski, who was an artist and a Bohemian.

But as she was comparatively short and had large hips, in the act of crossing her feet her dress was raised too high. Young Kladzki immediately dropped a match and began to search on the floor, and he continued looking for it so long that his uncle was obliged to whisper to him angrily:

“What do you imagine? Where are you?”

And the young nobleman stretched himself and whispered back:

“That’s the trouble. I don’t know where I am.”

Pani Elzen knew by experience that even well-bred men, when they have the smallest opportunity, become rough, especially in the presence of women without protection. This time, it is true, she did not see young Kladzki’s movement, but having noticed the disdainful and almost cynical smile with which he answered his uncle, she was sure he was talking about her. And she felt a contempt for all the company, with the exception of Swirski and Kresowicz, whom she suspected of being in love with her, notwithstanding his hatred for the women of her social rank. But she almost had an attack of hysterics that evening on account of Wia-

drowski's talk, because it seemed that he wished to poison her every spoonful of coffee in exchange for her good dinner. He spoke generally and apparently objectively about women, not overstepping the limits of decency, but at the bottom of his talk there was not only cynicism but also plenty of allusions to Pani Elzen's character and her social standing—and those allusions were offensive and very unpleasant, especially in Swirski's presence, who suffered very much on account of it.

Therefore a load fell from her heart when finally the guests departed and the painter alone remained.

“Ah!” she exclaimed, breathing deeply, “I feel the beginning of a headache, and I don't know what is the matter with myself!”

“Have they tired you?”

“Yes, yes—more than tired!”

“Why do you invite them?”

And, as if she could not control her nerves, she approached him feverishly:

“Sit down and do not move! I don’t know—perhaps you will think ill of me, but I need it like medicine. That way! To remain that way with an honest man! That way!”

Having said this she sat beside him, put her head on his shoulder, and closed her eyes.

“Yes, only a moment that way! only a moment!”

Suddenly her eyelids were moistened with tears, but she pressed Swirski’s lips with her finger, in order to prevent him from speaking and in order to remain silent herself.

His heart throbbed, being always as soft as wax when he saw a woman crying. He was pleased with the confidence she placed in him. He understood that the decisive

moment had come; therefore, encircling her waist with his arm, he said:

“Remain with me forever; give me the right over you.”

Pani Elzen did not answer; only from her eyes fell big, quiet tears.

“Be mine!” repeated Swirski.

Then she threw her hand on his other shoulder and nestled to him as a child nestles to its mother.

And Swirski, having bent, kissed her forehead; then he began to wipe her tears with kisses, and gradually the flame was seizing him; after awhile he took her in his arms, pressed her to his breast, and touched her mouth with his lips.

But she defended herself.

“No! no!” she said breathlessly, “you are not like the others. No! no! Have mercy!”

Swirski held her in his arms; in that moment he was exactly like the others,

but happily for Pani Elzen a soft knocking at the door was heard.

They separated immediately, jumping in opposite directions.

“Who is there?” asked Pani Elzen impatiently.

Kresowicz’s gloomy face appeared in the doorway.

“Excuse me,” said he with trembling voice, “Romulus is coughing, and I am afraid he has the fever. I thought it would be proper to let you know about it.”

Swirski arose.

“Shall I go for a doctor?”

But Pani Elzen had already recovered her coolness.

“Thank you,” said she; “if it be necessary we can send some one from the hotel; but first I must see the child. Thank you! I must be going. Therefore, until to-morrow, thank you!”

Having said this, she stretched toward

him her hand, which Swirski raised to his mouth.

“Until to-morrow and every day, *au revoir!*”

Pani Elzen, having remained with Kresowicz, looked at him inquiringly.

“What is the matter with Romulus?”

He became still paler, and answered almost roughly:

“Nothing!”

“What do you mean?” asked she, frowning.

“It means that you must chase me out, because I will become mad!”

And he went out.

Pani Elzen stood for awhile with the lightning of anger in her eyes and with frowning eyebrows, but gradually her forehead became smooth. In fact, she was thirty-five years old, and here was a new proof that until now nobody could resist her charms.

After awhile she approached the mirror as if looking for an affirmation of that thought.

In the meanwhile Swirski was returning to Nice in an empty railroad car, continually raising to his face his hands, which were scented with heliotrope. He felt uneasy, though happy, and the blood rushed to his head when he smelled Pani Elzen's favorite perfume.

CHAPTER III.

THE next day, however, when he awakened his head was heavy, as if he had spent the night in drinking; and there was a great uneasiness in his heart. When daylight falls upon the theatrical scenery, then that which during the evening looked enchanting appears to be a daub. The same happens in life. Swirski had not met with anything unexpected. He knew that he was drifting toward what happened the preceding night and that he must eventually reach it, but now when everything was ended, an incomprehensible fear seized him. He thought yesterday that he could retreat, but now it was too late. In vain he repeated to himself that there was no

time for reasoning. Different objections, which he had made to himself, to Pani Elzen, and especially to marriage with her, returned to his mind with increased force. The voice which before whispered constantly into his ear, "Don't be an ass!" now began to shout, "You are an ass!" And he could silence it neither by arguments nor by repeating "It is done!" because common sense said to him that a stupid thing had been done, and the cause of it was his feebleness.

And at this thought he was ashamed. Were he a youngster he could excuse himself by youth; had he just met this lady on the Riviera, and heard nothing about her, he would be justified, for he would not have known her character and her heart. It is true he had seen her seldom, but he had heard enough about her, because in Warsaw they talked about her more than about anybody else. They called her

“Wonder - wife,” and the local gossips used to sharpen their witty tongues on her as a knife is sharpened on a stone, which, however, did not stop the men from crowding her drawing-room. The women, although more hostile toward her, received her also, on account of numerous relationships by which she was bound to society people. Some of them, especially those who were interested that public opinion should not be too severe, even defended the beautiful widow. Others, less indulgent, did not dare to close the door against her, because they did not wish to be the first in doing it. A certain local playwright, hearing some one calling Pani Elzen a “demi-monde,” said that she was neither “the whole world nor half a world, but rather three-quarters of an hour into the world.” But as in larger cities everything smoothes, therefore Pani Elzen’s situation was *smoothed* also. Her

friends used to say: "It's true that one cannot ask from Helena extraordinary virtues, but she has her good sides." And unknowingly they granted her the right to be more free than the others. Sometimes they mentioned that before her husband's death she had not lived with him for several years; sometimes they muttered that she was bringing up Romulus and Remus to be clowns, or that she did not care about them at all; were Pani Elzen less beautiful and less rich nobody would have paid any attention to such malicious remarks. But the men did not restrain themselves in their conversation about her. Even those who were in love with her attacked her through jealousy; the only silent one was he who appeared to be more lucky than the others. In general, however, the malignity went so far that they said that Pani Helena had one lover for her sojourn in the city during the

winter and another for the summer season. Swirski knew about all this. He knew even more than others, because a certain Mrs. Bronish, with whom he was acquainted in Warsaw, being a good friend of the beautiful widow, told him about some serious accident to Pani Elzen which terminated by a long illness. "God only knows how terribly poor Helena suffered, and it must be that in mercy it came beforehand, in order to preserve her from greater moral sufferings!" It is true that Swirski supposed that this "serious accident" was purely a lie, but at any rate it was impossible for him to have any illusions about Pani Elzen, or at least he could not believe she was the woman to whom one could safely trust one's happiness.

Just the same, all this news excited his curiosity and attracted him toward her. Having heard about her sojourn in Monte

Carlo, he wished to meet her and know her better. As an artist he wished also to see for himself the charm by which this woman, so generally slandered, bewitched the men.

In the beginning he experienced only disillusion. She was beautiful and sensually attractive, but he noticed that she was lacking in kindness and good will toward the people. The men interested her only so far as they stood in some relation to her—were necessary to her. Beyond that she was as indifferent as a stone. Swirski did not notice in her any admiration for intellectual life, for literature, for art. She took from it what was necessary for her, giving nothing reciprocally. And he, as an artist and a thinking man, understood perfectly that such a state of the soul betrays a barbarous and gross nature, notwithstanding all refined appearances. He had known such women before. He

knew that they dominated the people by a certain strength, produced by determination and a large, absolute egotism. About such beings they said very often when he was present: "She is cold but intelligent." But he always thought of such women with disdain. According to his judgment they were a species destitute of higher spiritual culture, and even common sense, because the common sense which wants everything for itself and does not grant anything to others the animals possess also. Equally in Pani Elzen, as well as in Romulus and Remus, he saw the type in which culture begins and ends with the skin, leaving untouched the plebeian and rougher depths. Besides that he was shocked by her cosmopolitanism. In fact, she was like a worn-out piece of money—it was difficult to distinguish to what country she belonged; Swirski was disgusted with it, not only because he

looked differently on that question, but also as a man who was acquainted with really good society and knew that the best people in England, France, or Italy looked with disdain on those Nicean-cosmopolite weeds without roots.

Wiadrowski was right in saying that Romulus and Remus were brought up as traveling salesmen or porters in big hotels. It was a well-known fact that Pani Elzen's father had a title, but that her grandfather was an overseer, and it appeared to Swirski, who possessed an appreciation of the ridiculous in a high degree, perfectly comical that the grandsons of an overseer not only did not speak good Polish, but imitated Parisians, and did not pronounce the letter "r." They were good-looking boys, even very good looking. Swirski, however, felt with his fine artistic sense that in those two bird-like skulls and bird-like faces the beauty was not something

inherited for generations, but something accidental, some physiological accident, in consequence of being twins. And he repeated to himself in vain that their mother was also beautiful: a sentiment always remained in him that the beauty did not belong either to the mother or to the sons, and that they were parvenus pecuniarily as well as morally and physically. But longer contact with them weakened those impressions.

Pani Elzen from the beginning of their acquaintance began to be attracted toward him and to favor him. He was worth more than her other acquaintances, he had a good name, he was rich and famous. It is true, he was not young, but Pani Elzen was thirty-five; besides that, his herculean stature could replace his youth. Finally, to marry him meant to the woman about whom people talked sneeringly, the recovery of honor and moral position.

True enough, she could see that it would be difficult to capture him, but she knew that he was good, and, like every artist, had a certain amount of naivete at the bottom of his soul; therefore Pani Elzen calculated that she would be able to bend him toward her. And she was guided not only by pure calculation: in a measure he let himself be attracted; he attracted her also. Finally she began to persuade herself that she was in love with him—she even believed it.

And with him happened that which happens to many intelligent men. His common sense ended the moment the senses began to talk, or worse still, he went into their service, and instead of fighting them he was obliged to furnish them with arguments. In that way Swirski, who knew and understood everything, began to justify, soften, explain, defend.

“It’s true,” he said to himself, “that

neither her nature nor her conduct until now has given any guarantee, but who will prove to me that she is not tired of that life and that she is not longing of her whole soul after the other life? Without any doubt, in her conduct there is much coquetry, but who will guarantee that she does not display this coquetry because she loves me sincerely? It is childishness to imagine that a woman, although full of errors, does not possess any good qualities. Ah! the human soul—what a mixture! Only opportunities are necessary that the good may be developed and the bad disappear. Pani Elzen was no longer young. How stupid it would be to admit that there is no voice in her asking for a virtuous, quiet life, for peace, for tranquillity! Precisely on account of these reasons such a woman may appreciate an honest man who guarantees her all this.”

Especially this last appeared to him very just and deep. Previously common sense had told him that Pani Elzen wished to catch him, but he answered now: "She is right, because of every one, even the most ideal woman, who wishes to unite with a beloved man, one might say that she wishes to catch him!"

The hope of having children tranquilized him in regard to the future. He thought that then she would love some one, and she would be obliged to break with the worldly, empty life, because she would not have time—and before the children would have grown up her youth would have passed, and then home would attract her more than the world. Finally he said to himself: "The life must be arranged before old age comes; I will live a few years with a beautiful, interesting woman, with whom every day will be to me a holiday."

And those "few years" were in fact the principal attraction for him. It is true to Pani Elzen there was something humiliating in the fact that he was not afraid of any extraordinary event, for the reason that she was no longer young, and therefore the possibility would soon pass away. But he did not admit to himself that precisely that thought was the foundation of his hope—and he deceived himself, as people always do in whom the common sense becomes the servant of the passions.

But the man, after the previous night's events, awakened with an uneasiness and disgust. He could not resist thinking about two things: In the first place, that if some one had told him a month before that he would propose to Pani Elzen, he would look on him as an ass; then, that the charm of the relation with her, and which consisted in uncertainty, in mutual guessing of looks and thoughts, in unfin-

ished words, in suspended avowals and reciprocal attraction, was stronger than the one which was the consequence of the present change. It was more agreeable to Swirski to anticipate the betrothal than to become affianced, and just now he was thinking that if his pleasure in becoming a husband should become less in the same proportion as the pleasure of being affianced had diminished, then the deuce take such a life! There were moments in which the thought that he was bound, and that, willing or not willing, he would be obliged to take in his boat of life Pani Elzen, with Romulus and Remus, appeared to him almost unbearable. In those moments, being a loyal man, he did not curse Pani Elzen, but he cursed Romulus and Remus—their rolling of the letter “r,” their bird-like, narrow heads and bird-like skulls.

“I had my sorrows, but in fact I was

free as a bird, and could put my whole soul into the pictures," he said so himself, "and now the devil knows how it will be!"

Here the sorrows of the painter spoiled his humor altogether, although they gave another direction to his thoughts. Pani Elzen and the whole matrimonial affair began to retreat to the background, and the picture, "Dream and Death," came out to the foreground. He had been painting this picture for several months, and he considered it of great importance, because he proposed by it to protest against the generally accepted idea of death. Often in conversation with his friends Swirski was vehement against the Christianity which introduced the skeleton into life and art as a representation of death. To Swirski it appeared outrageous. The Greeks imagined Thanatos as a genius with wings, and they were right. What can be

more ugly and more frightful than a skeleton? Christians, at least, who in death see the gate to a new life, ought not to have painted it that way. According to Swirski this idea was born of the gloomy German spirit, the same which developed the majestic, grand, gothic style, but which is so gloomy, as if the church was not a passage to the light of heaven, but to subterraneous and hopeless precipices. Swirski was astonished that the renaissance had not reformed the symbol of death. If death were not an eternal silence, and would like to complain, it would say: "Why do people represent me by the figure of a skeleton? The skeleton is precisely the thing for which I do not wish and which I do not leave." Therefore in Swirski's picture the genius of sleep was gently offering the body of a girl to the genius of death, who, bending over her, blew out softly the flame of a small lamp burn-

ing above her head. Swirski while painting repeated to himself: "It is necessary that the man who looks at it should say to himself before all: 'Ah! how quiet it is!'" And he wanted this silence to flow on the spectator from the lines, from the figure, from the expression, from the coloring. He thought also that if he could be able to produce this impression, and if the picture could explain itself, it would become a new and remarkable work.

He cared about something more. Following the stream of time, he agreed that painting must avoid literary ideas; he understood, however, that there is a great difference between giving up literary ideas and thoughtless reproduction of the exterior world as a photographic plate reproduces it. Shape, color, spot—nothing more!—as if the duty of a painter were to kill in himself the thinking being! And he remembered that every time he saw,

for instance, the pictures of the English painters, he was struck before all with the high intellectual level of those artists. One could see from their canvases that they were masters of high spiritual culture, very much developed psychically, thinking deeply, often great students. In Poles he had seen something quite different. With the exception of several the majority of them were capable men, but thoughtless, very little developed, and bare of education. They lived on old doctrinarian crumbs falling from French tables, not admitting for a moment that one can say anything original about art, to create it in the Polish way. It was clear to Swirski that the doctrine allowing them lack of thought was welcome to them. To be called an artist, but in the meanwhile to be a clown as far as it concerns the spirit, was a very comfortable thing. To read,

to know, to think—to the deuce with such a work!

Swirski believed that if even a landscape is a state of the soul, it is necessary that this soul should be not a soul of a peasant, but subtile, impressive, developed, worked out. He quarreled about that with his comrades and discussed passionately. “I don’t ask from you,” shouted he, “that you paint as well as do Frenchmen, Englishmen, or Spaniards. I want you to paint better! before all, in your own way. And the one who does not strive for that ought to become a shoemaker!”

And he tried to prove that it does not matter if a picture represents a stack of hay, or hens scratching in the barnyard, or potatoes in the field, or horses in the pasture, or a corner of still water in a pond, the principal thing dominating everything in it must be the soul. Therefore in his portraits he tried to put as

much of his soul as he could; besides this he expressed himself in other pictures, the last of them being "Hypnos and Thanatos."

The two genii were almost finished, but there were some difficulties with the girl's head. Swirski understood that she must not only be beautiful but full of individuality. There were plenty of pretty models, but they did not possess enough personality. It is true that Mme. Lageat, from whom he rented his studio, promised him to search for a good model, but she was very slow. A new model promised to come this morning, but had not put in an appearance, although it was already half-past eleven.

All this, with last night's matrimonial proposition, was the reason that Swirski began to be disturbed, not only about his peace of mind, but also about his artistic future in general, and about his picture in

particular. At that moment Hypnos appeared to him heavy, Thanatos stupid. Finally he said to himself that, as long as he was unable to work, it would be better to go to the shore, where the view of the water and the sun would brighten his thoughts and soul.

But just at that moment, when he was ready to go out, the bell was heard in the antechamber, then two Scotch tartans, two bangs, and the two bird-like heads of Romulus and Remus appeared in his studio. Kresowicz, paler and gloomier than ever, followed them.

“Good-morning, sir! Good-morning, sir!” shouted both boys. “*Maman* sent you these roses and begs you to come to luncheon.”

Then they began to run and look round the studio. They were very much surprised at the nude sketches; they stopped before them and elbowed each other.

"Tiens!"

"Regarde!"

It made Swirski angry, and he said, looking at his watch:

"We must be going if we wish to have some luncheon."

He took his hat and they went out. As there were no carriages near the studio they walked. While walking the artist asked Kresowicz:

"Well, how are your pupils?"

Kresowicz turned to him, his ironical face full of hatred, and answered:

"My pupils? They are all right. They are as healthy as fish, and their Scotch dresses are becoming to them. But I don't care about them."

"Why?"

"Because I am going to leave them to-morrow."

"What is the matter?" asked Swirski,

with some astonishment. "I did not know. It's a pity!"

"Not for them," answered Kresowicz.

"It must be for the reason that they cannot understand it."

"They never will be able to understand—neither to-day nor any other time! never!"

"I hope time will prove that you are mistaken," answered Swirski dryly. "At any rate, I am sorry to hear it."

But the student went on about himself.

"Yes, it's a pity, but it's a pity to waste the time. They don't need me, and I don't need them. They will be such as they will be. The person who wishes to sow wheat must plow the soil, and the poorer it is the easier to plow it. One could say much about it, but it's not worth while, especially for me. Microbes will eat me up just the same."

"You were never threatened with con-

sumption? Pani Elzen asked a doctor about your health, and he assured her that there was no danger."

"To be sure, there is no danger. And then I discovered a sure remedy against microbes."

"What remedy have you discovered?"

"It will be published in the papers. Such discoveries one does not hide under a bushel."

Swirski looked at Kresowicz as if he wished to ascertain whether he had a fever; at the same time they arrived at the station which was swarming with people.

The Nicean guests were going in the morning, as usual, to Monte Carlo. While Swirski was purchasing the tickets Wia-drowski perceived and approached him.

"Good-morning!" said he. "To Monte Carlo?"

"Yes. Have you your ticket already?"

"I have a season ticket. We will be

crowded in the train. It's a true exodus isn't it? And everybody carries the widow's mite. Good-morning, Mr. Kresowicz. What do you say about life here? Make some remark from the point of view of your party."

Kresowicz began to blink his eyes as if he could not understand what they wanted from him; then he said:

"I have joined the party of silent people."

"I know, I know! Splendid party! The company is either silent or it explodes."

And he began to laugh.

The bell for departure had rung and they were obliged to hasten. The shouting: "*En voiture! En voiture!*" sounded. In a moment Swirski, Kresowicz, Wiadrowski, and the two boys were in the train.

"Look!" said Wiadrowski, "We can't

even dream about a seat. A true immigration!"

In fact, there was a great crowd of every nationality: Poles, Russians, Englishmen, Frenchmen, Germans—all were going to conquer the bank, which every day repulsed and broke these crowds, as a rock breaks the waves of the sea. There were also numerous women scented with heliotrope. The sun lighted the artificial flowers on their hats, velvet, lace, artificial or real jewels, objects shining like polished armor on round bosoms, blackened eyebrows, faces covered with powder and animated by the hope of enjoyment and gambling. The most experienced eye was not able to distinguish the fast women from the society women. The men, with violets in their buttonholes, looked at those women inquisitively and impertinently, inspecting dresses, shoulders, faces, and hips with as cold blood as one looks

on the things exhibited for sale in the shop windows. In this crowd there was haste and disorder. At certain moments the train rushed into the darkness of the tunnel; then again the sunlight, the sky, the sea, the palms, the olive trees, the villas shone in the windows, and a moment after the darkness again covered everything. The stations passed one after another. New crowds of people squeezed into the train. They were elegantly dressed, refined, as if they were rushing to some great and joyful festival.

“What a true picture of life!” said Wiadrowski.

“What is a true picture?”

“The train—I could philosophize about it until luncheon, but as I prefer to philosophize after luncheon, perhaps you will be willing to eat it with me.”

“No,” said Swirski, “you must excuse me; I am invited by Pani Elzen.”

“In that case I retreat!”

And he began to laugh. The thought that Swirski might marry Pani Elzen did not enter his mind even for a moment. He was sure that the painter only cared for her the same as the others did, but being a great admirer of artists in general and Swirski in particular, he was pleased that he was ahead of his competitors in her favor.

“I represent the wealth,” he was thinking. “Porzecki title, the young Kladzki the youth, and Sinten the world of fashionable stupid chaps. All that, especially here, carries a great weight, and the Dame aux Camelias has chosen him. At any rate, she has fine taste.”

And looking at the painter he began to mutter:

“*Jo triumphe, tu moraris aureos currus.*”

“What do you say?” asked Swirski, who

did not hear well on account of the noise of the train.

“Nothing. Some hiccoughs from Horatius. I say, as you refuse, I will give a consolation luncheon to myself, De Sinten, Porzecki, and Kladzki.”

“May I ask you for what you wish to be consoled?” asked Swirski, approaching swiftly and looking into his eyes almost threateningly.

“For the loss of your company,” coolly answered Wiadrowski. “And what did you suppose, my dear sir?”

Swirski bit his lips and said nothing. But he thought that the proverb, “The cap always burns on the head of a thief,” was right—because if he were going to marry an honest girl he never would suppose that any one speaking ironically was thinking about her.

When they arrived, Pani Elzen, fresh, young and beautiful, was waiting at the

station. Evidently she had just come, because she breathed deeply and her face was flushed as with emotion. Therefore, when she stretched both her hands to Swirski, Wiadrowski thought:

“Yes! he has beaten us all. She looks to be really in love.” And he looked on her almost with sympathy. In a white flannel dress, with shining eyes, she seemed to him, notwithstanding some powder on her face, as young and charming as ever. For awhile he regretted he was not that happy mortal whom she came to greet; and he thought that the method by which he had tried to gain her favor, consisting in telling her hard things, was stupid. But he consoled himself with the thought that he could laugh at Sinten and others who were beaten.

After the greeting Swirski thanked her for the roses, but she was listening with some embarrassment, looking from time

to time at Wiadrowski, as if she were ashamed that he heard those thanks.

As for him, he understood that it would be best for him at present to leave them. But they went together in the lift to the heights on which the gambling house and the gardens are situated. On the way Pani Elzen entirely regained her self-possession.

“Let us have luncheon! Let us have luncheon!” she said joyfully. “I have an appetite like a whale.”

Wiadrowski muttered that he would like to be Jonah, but he did not say it aloud, thinking that Swirski might seize him by the collar of his coat and throw him from the lift, as the joke deserved.

In the garden he took leave of them and departed; but looking backward he perceived Pani Elzen leaning on Swirski's arm and whispering something to him.

“They are speaking about dessert after the breakfast!” thought he.

But he was mistaken, because she, turning her charming face toward the painter, whispered:

“Does Wiadrowski know?”

“No,” answered Swirski, “I only met him in the train.”

Having said this, he felt some uneasiness that Pani Elzen is speaking about betrothals, and that it would be necessary to tell everybody about it, but in the meanwhile her beauty and charms began to act upon him in such a way that he became courageous.

They had luncheon together with Romulus, Remus, and Kresowicz, who during the whole time did not say a word. After the coffee Pani Elzen gave the boys permission to go with the young man in the direction of Rocca Brune, and then she asked Swirski:

“Do you prefer to take a walk or ride?”

He would prefer to go to her apartment and pause there at least “halfway to paradise”—and obtain “at least half-salvation”—but he thought that if she did not wish it it was the best proof of how earnestly and nobly she looked on their relation, and that he ought to be grateful for it.

“If you are not tired I prefer to walk,” answered he.

“Very well. I am not tired at all. But where shall we go? Would you like to look at the pigeon shooting?”

“Willingly. But there we will not be alone. I am sure Sinten and young Kladzki are practicing after breakfast.”

“Yes, but they will not bother us. When there is a question about pigeons they become blind and deaf to everything around them. And then let them see me with my great man!”

And bending her head she looked into his eyes, smiling.

“But perhaps the great man does not wish it?”

“On the contrary, let them see us!” answered Swirski, raising her hand to his lips.

“Let us go, then. I like to look at it.”

“Very well.”

And in a moment they were on the large stairs leading to the shooting club.

“What a light here, and how happy I am!” said Pani Elzen.

Then, although there was nobody there, she asked him in a whisper:

“And you?”

“My light is with me!” answered he, pressing her arm to his breast.

And they began to descend. In fact the day seemed to be brighter than ever; the air was golden and blue; the sea in the distance looked like lapis lazuli.

“Let us stop here,” said Pani Elzen.
“From here we can see the cages.”

Under their feet stretched a large green lawn, running out to the sea. The cages with pigeons were disposed on it in a half-circle. Each moment one of them opened suddenly, the frightened bird flew, then the shot resounded, and the pigeon fell either on the grass or into the sea, where on the waves small boats with fishermen were expectantly waiting for the prey.

It sometimes happened, however, that the pigeon was missed; then he flew toward the sea, and, having made a circle, returned, looking for shelter in the cornices of the Casino.

“From here we don’t see who shoots,” mirthfully said Pani Elzen; “therefore let us tell our fortune: If the first pigeon falls down we remain in Monte Carlo; if he flies away we will go to Italy.”

“So be it,” said Swirski. “Let us look! There he is!”

In fact the cage was opened, and at that moment the pigeon, as if stunned, remained on the spot. They forced him to fly, by rolling on the grass toward him a wooden ball, and then the shot was heard. But the bird did not fall immediately. In the first place he had risen very high in the air, then he flew directly to the sea, coming down gradually, as if wounded. Finally he disappeared in the blaze of the sun.

“Maybe he fell down, maybe not. The future is uncertain,” said Swirski, laughing.

But Pani Elzen moved her lips like an angry child:

“It’s this horrid Sinten,” said she. “I bet it was he. Let us go down.”

And they descended nearer and nearer to the shooting gallery. Pani Elzen

stopped at every shot. In her white dress, on the background of green she looked like a statue.

“There is no other material which makes as pretty drapery as flannel,” said Swirski.

“Ah, those artists!” answered the young woman.

And in her voice there was some irony, for she felt offended that at that moment Swirski should be thinking about draperies and different fabrics instead of her.

“Let us be going!”

A few moments later they were in the shooting gallery. Of their acquaintances only Sinten was there, shooting with some Hungarian count, both dressed in brown English coats, with caps of the same color, Scotch stockings, both very *distingués* and with faces as expressive as that of a stupid ass. But it was as Pani Elzen said—Sinten was so busy shooting that he did

not notice them at once, and only after a long wait did he come to greet them.

“How is your luck?” asked the lady.

“I shall beat! I am sure I will win.”

Here he turned to Swirski: “Don’t you shoot?”

“I do, but not to-day.”

“As for me,” answered Sinten, looking significantly at Pani Elzen, “I am to-day *heureux au jeu!*”

They called him to the shooting.

“He wanted to say that he was unhappy in love,” said Swirski.

“Imbecile! Could it be different?”

But notwithstanding those words of censure, one could see by the face of the beautiful lady that she was not offended, that in Swirski’s presence they gave testimony to her personal popularity.

It was not the last testimony that day.

“I wished to ask you about something,” said Swirski after a short silence, “but I

could not do it in the presence of the children and Kresowicz, who told me that he was going to leave. Is it true?"

"It's true," answered Pani Elzen. "In the first place, I am not sure of his health. A few days ago I made him go to see the doctor, who informed me that he was not threatened with consumption; otherwise I wouldn't keep him an hour; but at any rate he looks worse every day; he is whimsical, irritable, often unbearable. That's the first reason; then you know his tendencies—I know they will not stick to Romulus and Remus. I bring up the boys in such a way that they would not care for the ideas of the red party. But I don't wish them even to know that such principles exist—that they meet such hatred toward the class of people among whom they live. It was sufficient for me that you wished them to speak with somebody in their own language. It

was for me almost a command. I understand that they ought to know their own language. Now the people are insisting upon it, and I agree they are right. But even in that Kresowicz is opinionated."

"I shall miss him! Around the eyes he has certain wrinkles which signify fanaticism; but his is an interesting face though he is a very peculiar man."

"The painter is talking through you again," said Pani Elzen, laughing.

But after awhile she became sober and even somewhat embarrassed.

"I have one reason more," said she. "It's unpleasant to speak about, but I must tell you, because with whom should I be sincere if not with my—great man—who is so dear and good, who is able to be indulgent in everything? Well, then, I noticed that Kresowicz lost his head and fell in love with me, and under those circumstances he couldn't remain near me."

“What? This one also?” exclaimed Swirski.

“Yes!” answered she, dropping her eyes.

And she tried to simulate that this confession was unpleasant for her, but all the same, as at Sinten’s words a smile of satisfied self-love and womanly vanity passed over her face. Swirski noticed it, and an unpleasant, angry feeling filled his heart.

“Then I am also struck by the epidemic,” said he.

She looked at him for awhile and then asked quietly:

“Was that said by a jealous or an ungrateful man?”

But the painter answered evasively:

“You are right. Kresowicz ought to leave.”

“I will pay him to-day.”

Then they were silent. Sinten and the Hungarian count’s shooting was heard.

Swirski, however, could not pardon that smile he had noticed. "It is true," he said to himself, "that Pani Elzen acted with Kresowicz as she ought to, and that there is no reason to be irritated." But he was irritated just the same. Some time ago, at the beginning of their acquaintance, he had seen her riding on horseback; she was in the lead, followed by Sinten, Kladzki, Porzecki, Wilkisbey, and Waxford. This cavalcade made a very bad impression on Swirski, an impression of a kind of beastly run of males after a female. The same picture now stood in his memory, and his impressionable artistic nature suffered considerably. "Precisely speaking," he said to himself, "everybody runs after her, and in case I fall over some obstacle she will be reached by the next one!"

Pani Elzen interrupted his reflections; she complained that she was cold there in

the shadow, and said that she wished to warm herself in the sun.

“Let us go to the hotel—you can take your jacket,” said he.

They started on their return to the upper terrace, but when halfway on the stairs she stopped suddenly.

“You are not satisfied with me,” said she. “Of what am I guilty? What have I done to displease you?”

Swirski had become quieter while walking, and answered:

“You must excuse an old crank. I beg your pardon.”

Pani Elzen wanted to know by all means why he was sad, but she could not make him talk. Then, half-seriously and half-jokingly, she began to complain against artists. What a strange and unbearable people they are!—shocked by any trifle, they shut their impressions within themselves,

and then escape to their solitary studios. To-day three times she noticed the painter in him. That's bad! Therefore, for a punishment, this unbearable painter must stay with her until evening for dinner.

But Swirski said that he must return to Nice; then he spoke to her about his troubles as an artist, about difficulties in finding a model for "Dream and Death," and about the hope of success he had in this picture.

"I see," answered the young widow, smiling, "that I shall always have a frightful rival in art."

"It's not the rival," answered Swirski. "It's God, whom you will serve with me."

The pretty lady frowned at that, but in the meanwhile they arrived at the hotel. That day Swirski went three-thirds of the way to paradise, and left his pretty widow with shivers of delight in his bones, but

with conviction that only matrimony would open the gate.

His brain having cooled, he was grateful to Pani Elzen; she inspired him with such a conviction.

CHAPTER IV.

PANI ELZEN, before she began to dress for dinner, called Kresowicz in order to pay him, which she did with a certain curiosity, anxious to know how he would bid her good-by. She had seen so many commonplace people, who appeared as if cut by the same tailor according to the same measure, that this odd young fellow excited her curiosity; and now, when he was about to depart with bleeding heart, he interested her a great deal more. She was sure that his passion would be shown in some way, and she even wished for it, promising to herself, not very sincerely, however, to stop it with a look or word, if he should overstep certain bounds.

But Kresowicz when he entered her room was cold and threatening, and his face was other than that of a person enamoured. Pani Elzen, having glanced at him, thought that Swirski, being an artist, was right in having noticed that head, which really had something exceptional in its expression. Its lines were iron-like, in which the will was stronger than the intelligence, giving to them in a certain degree a stubborn expression. Swirski had noticed for a long time that he was one of those men who, if they seize some idea, their faith will never be disturbed by skepticism, and never a doubt will shake their ability for action, because with a stubborn and strong character goes a certain narrowness of the mind. Fanaticism grows only on such a field. Pani Elzen, notwithstanding her cleverness, was too superficial to be able to recognize that. Kresowicz would have attracted her atten-

tion if he were an exceptionally good-looking boy, but as he was not, therefore in the beginning she treated him like an ordinary object, and only Swirski had taught her to think about him differently. Just now she received him kindly, and, after having paid him she said, with a cold and indifferent voice, but with well-chosen words, that she was very sorry that on account of her departure from Monte Carlo she would be obliged to dismiss him.

Kresowicz mechanically put the money into his pocket and answered:

“I told you myself yesterday that I would not teach Romulus and Remus any longer.”

“Exactly—it comforts me!” she said, raising her head.

Evidently she wished, at least in the beginning, to hold the conversation in a ceremonious tone, and obliged Kresowicz to speak in the same way. But to look at

him one could see that he had an unbended determination to tell everything he had to tell.

“You paid me with good money,” said he; “you mustn’t now give me any counterfeit.”

“What do you mean?”

“I mean this,” he said vehemently, “that you neither dismissed me on account of your departure nor do I quit for the same reason. The cause is quite different, and you know it as well as I do.”

“If I know it, it’s probable that I don’t wish either to hear or to talk about it,” said she haughtily.

He advanced a step toward her, holding up his threatening head.

“But you must hear it!” said he emphatically. “In the first place, because in a moment I will be gone away; then, on account of the other reason, about which you will learn to-morrow.”

Pani Elzen rose from her chair, and with frowning eyebrows and in the theatrical pose of an offended queen, she said:

“What do you mean?”

He approached nearer, until his face was only a few inches from hers, and began to talk with concentrated energy:

“It means that I ought to have hated you and your sphere, and I fell in love with you. It means that for you I committed in my conscience a crime, for which I shall punish myself. But precisely for this reason I have nothing to lose, and you must pay me for my wrong, otherwise something dreadful will happen.”

Pani Elzen was not frightened, because she did not fear men at all. She was astonished, and at once uttered an exclamation of amazement:

“*Mais c'est un vrai oiseau de proie,* which may tear me into pieces!” For that adventurous woman, familiar with corrup-

tion, any adventure especially flattering to her womanly selfishness had a great charm. To all that her moral sense was not afraid of trifling. Had Kresowicz beseeched her for one minute of happiness, for permission to kiss the edge of her dress with humility, with tears and on his knees, she would have ordered him to be thrown out. But this threatening and almost crazy man, who represented a sect about whose fearful energy they told dreadful stories in society, appeared to her demon-like—so different from other people, something so out of the ordinary that she was simply in an ecstasy of delight. Her nerves were longing after something new. She thought if she resisted the adventure might assume unforeseen dimensions and turn into a scandal, for the crazy man was ready for anything.

Kresowicz spoke further, breathing in her face his warm respiration:

“I love, and I have nothing to lose! I lost my health and my future, and I committed a base action! I have nothing to lose! Do you understand? I don’t care if ten or a hundred people rush here if you give an alarm. But you won’t do it. After that I will go away and the secret will never be revealed—I swear!”

Pani Elzen cared only to save appearances, which with womanly hypocrisy she always tried to preserve—in order to deceive herself.

Therefore, turning toward him eyes full of artificial fight, she asked:

“Do you wish to kill me?”

“I want to be paid, but not with money!” he answered in a choked voice.

Then he became paler; he seized her and hugged her. She defended herself, but she did it like a fainting woman, from whom fright has taken all consciousness and strength.

CHAPTER V.

WHEN Swirski arrived at Ville Franche he alighted from the carriage and went to the harbor, because the idea came to him to return to Nice in a boat. He found a fisherman with whom he was acquainted, and who, being pleased to see his liberal customer, agreed with Ligurian boastfulness to go with him "even to Corsica, and though the sirocco should turn the bottom of the sea."

This time there was only a question of a small trip, so much easier because there was not even the slightest wind. Swirski sat at the helm and they began to glide over the polished deep. After awhile, having passed the luxurious private yachts,

they approached the ironclads, whose quiet, enormous black bodies were outlined harshly and prominently in the southern sun. The deck of the Formidable was already decorated with multi-colored lanterns for the morrow's ball, to which Swirski was to be invited. The sailors on board of the monster looked like pigmies compared to the dimensions of the vessel. The iron sides of the man-of-war, smokestacks, masts, were all reflected in the transparent waters as in a mirror. From time to time a military boat, looking like a black worm, moving its feet regularly, passed among the ironclads. Beyond the vessels was an empty space, where the boat in which Swirski was sitting rose and fell with a broad and gentle movement. They approached high rocks to the right of the wharf, along which ran a gray, dusty road; further on was the parade ground, where the soldiers

drilled and practiced military maneuvers. Finally, having passed the cliff, round which the waves coming from the sea were splashing, they emerged on to the open waters.

Outside a seaport there is always some breeze; therefore the fisherman began to spread the sail, and Swirski, instead of directing toward Nice, turned the boat toward the sea. And as they proceeded straight ahead, balanced by the waves, the sun went down. The rocks and the sea turned crimson. Everything around was tranquil, quiet, and so gigantic that the thought came to Swirski: How small and paltry is life compared with the infinity which surrounded him at that moment! He felt as if he had left all his own and other people's affairs and had gone far, far away. Pani Elzen, Romulus, Remus, all acquaintances and the people swarming on the shore, full of life, uneasiness,

mean ambition and low passions, became smaller to him. And being a man accustomed to digest and analyze his thoughts and impressions, he was afraid that if he were really in love with Pani Elzen her image would not have been thus veiled, disturbed, diminished, and would never have disappeared. Swirski recollected how once, after the wedding of a woman with whom he was in love to another, he had left his country. For the first time then he saw Rome, Sicily, the sea, the shores of Africa—and none of those impressions could erase the image of the beloved woman. In the galleries, on the sea, and in the desert she was with him, and he felt everything through her, and everywhere he spoke to her as if she were present. The difference between those former years and to-day made him sad.

But the quietude of the evening and of

the sea pacified him. They went so far that the shore began to disappear. Then the sun set and the stars began to shine one after another. The dolphins, which by twilight like to swim around a boat, breaking the surface of the deep with their sharp backs, disappeared and everything was quiet. The surface of the water became so smooth that the sail hung flat. Finally the moon appeared from behind the mountains and bathed the sea with a greenish light as far as the limits of the horizon. A quiet, fair southern night began.

Swirski wrapped himself in the fisherman's pelerine and began to think. "Everything that surrounds me is not only beautiful but true also. Human life, if it is to be normal, must be inoculated on the trunk of nature—must grow from it as a branch grows from the tree and exists on the strength of the same laws. Then it

will be true and moral, because in fact morality is nothing else than the harmony of life with the general laws of nature. Here I am surrounded by simplicity and quietude; I understand it only as an artist, for I don't have them in myself as a man, because my life as well as the life of those people among whom I live is far from nature—it ceases to be governed by its laws and has become a lie. Everything in us is artificial. We have lost even the sentiment of natural laws. Our relations are based on falsehood, we have crooked minds, sick souls and passions. We deceive each other and ourselves, and finally nobody is sure whether he really wishes that which he wants or whether he is able to do that which he wishes.”

And at once, in the presence of the contrast of that night, of the infinity of the sea, of the stars, of the whole of nature, of its peacefulness, simplicity and might, a

sentiment of a gigantic lie in everyday relations seized him. This love for Pani Elzen appeared to him to be a lie; her relation to him a lie, to the children, to other men, to the world; this life on the sunny shore, the present and his own future a lie.

"It surrounds me like a net," he thought, "and I don't know how to escape from it!" And in fact it was true, because if the whole life is a lie then what shall one do? Return to nature? Begin some kind of wild, half-peasant life? Break with people and turn reformer? Swirski felt that he was too old and too skeptical for that. For that, it would be necessary to have Kresowicz's dogmatism and feel the evil in order to get a stimulant for reform and strength for the fight, and not look at it as an impression which may be weakened to-morrow!

But another thought came to Swirski,

One who does not feel strong enough to reform the world can escape from it for a certain time and rest. To-morrow he could be in Marseilles, and a couple of days after somewhere else, perhaps on the ocean, hundreds of miles from the shore—from sickly life, from its lies and swindles. In that way everything would be untied, or rather cut as with a knife.

And at one moment he was seized with such a desire to turn this thought into a deed that he ordered the boatman to return to Nice.

“An animal seeing that he is in a net,” thought he, “before all else tries to disentangle himself from it. It’s the first law and it’s in harmony with nature; therefore it’s moral. Pani Elzen alone is not my net. It’s everything taken together. But at the same time I feel that if I marry her I would marry the life of the lie. Even perhaps it would not be her fault, but the

necessity of things—and it's always permitted to escape from such landscapes."

Here he began to imagine other landscapes, which he was going to see in his flight: vast expanses of water and sand, unknown countries and peoples, the sincerity and truth of their primitive life, finally the variety of incidents and the great difference between the future and present days.

"I deserved it a long time ago!" he said to himself.

Then another thought came to his mind—a thought which may come only to an artist—that when one "gives his *fiancée* the cold shake" and goes, for instance, to Paris, such a deed would constitute suitable groundwork for "bad literature," but if one escapes somewhere as far as the equator, where the pepper grows, the fact of escaping becomes smaller compared with the great distance—the act creates a

different impression, looks more original, and is more fashionable.

“And I shall go,” thought he, “deucedly far!”

In the meanwhile Nice appeared to him in the form of a rope of lights. In the middle of this rope the building called “Jetée-Promenade” shone like a gigantic lantern. In proportion as the boat, propelled by a strong wind, approached the wharf, each of those lights changed into a fiery pillar shivering on the moving line of the shore. The sight of those lights made Swirski sober.

“The city!—and the life!” thought he. And at once all his previous projects began to disappear like nightmares, born of the emptiness and the night. That which awhile ago he considered right, easy and necessary to be executed, seemed to him now to be a fancy, bare of common sense and even dishonest. “No matter

what is the life, one must be careful. One who has lived under its laws as long as I have lived must feel that he is obliged to respect those laws. It's not difficult to say to one's self: 'I used them as long as they were useful to me;' but the moment I am bothered I return to nature."

Then he began to think hard—not about general theories, but about Pani Elzen.

"By what right should I leave her? If her life was artificial and false, if her past is not clear, I have known about it and was not obliged to propose. Now I would be right to break with her only if I had discovered in her some evil which she had concealed from me, or if in some way she were guilty toward me. But she is not guilty at all. She was honest and sincere with me. At any rate there is something in her which attracts me toward her; otherwise I would not have proposed. There are moments in which I feel that I

am in love with her, and if sometimes some doubts arise in me why should she suffer for it? My flight would at least wrong her."

He understood that for a decent man to think about flight, and to accomplish it, were two opposite extremes. He could only dream about it. Rather he would ask Pani Elzen to give him back his word. But to escape the danger—it would be a thing unworthy of his personal character and his thoroughly civilized race. Finally the thought that he would wrong Pani Elzen filled him with sorrow and she became dearer to him.

They reached the wharf and in a few minutes landed. He paid the fisherman, took a cab, and ordered the coachman to drive him to his studio. On the street, amid the noise, lights and movement, he was again seized by a longing after the

solitude, after that infinity of the waters, after that tranquillity and that great God's truth with which he had departed awhile before. Finally when near the studio the following thought came to his mind:

"It's strange," thought he, "that I, who was so much afraid of women and whom I distrusted so much, should finally select a woman who is able to arouse more troublesome impressions than all others can do."

Some kind of fatalism was in this whole affair, and without doubt Swirski would have found in that coincidence abundant material for reflection during the whole evening if not for the fact that immediately after he entered the house the servant handed him two letters. One contained an invitation for the ball on the *Formidable*, the other was from Mme. Lageat, the landlady. She wrote him that she was

going to Marseilles for a couple of days, and she also announced some news—that she had found a model which ought to satisfy the most exquisite taste—the girl was coming to-morrow.

CHAPTER VI.

IN fact the announced God's masterpiece came the next day at nine o'clock. Swirski was already dressed, waiting impatiently and full of uneasiness. Happily his fears proved to be vain: the first glance satisfied him. The young girl was tall, very graceful, had a small head, delicate face, beautiful hair, long eyelashes and a very fresh complexion. But Swirski was principally pleased that she had "her own face" and great charm in its expression. "She has noble movements," thought he, "and if she is as well formed as she looks, then 'Eureka!' I will engage her for a long time!"

He was also impressed by her timidity

and frightened looks. It is true he knew that models sometimes imitate modesty. But he supposed that this one did not imitate.

“What is thy name, my dear girl?”

“Maria Cervi.”

“Art thou from Nice?”

“Yes, from Nice.”

“Hast thou posed already?”

“No, sir.”

“Experienced models know what one requires from them; there is a great bother with fresh ones. Thou never posed in thy life?”

“No, sir.”

“How didst thou get the idea to become a model?”

The girl hesitated for a moment and blushed.

“Mme. Lageat told me that I would be able to earn some money that way.”

“Yes, but thou art afraid. Why art

thou afraid? I am not going to eat thee up! How much wilt thou ask for the sitting?"

"Mme. Lageat told me that you pay five francs."

"Mme. Lageat was mistaken. I pay ten francs."

The girl's face lighted up with joy, and she blushed still more.

"When shall I begin?" she asked with trembling voice.

"To-day—immediately!" said Swirski, pointing to the unfinished picture. "There is the screen; go and undress! Only to the waist. Thou wilt pose for the head, for the breast and part of the hips."

She turned toward him her astonished face, and her hands dropped slowly to her side.

"What do you mean, sir?" asked she timidly, looking at him with frightened eyes.

He answered a little bit impatiently:

“My dear girl, I understand that the first time it may be hard. But either one is a model or not. I need a head, a bust and a part of the hips very badly, understand? Then thou must know that there is nothing bad, and before all thou must think it over, and be quick, because if thou dost not wish, I will be obliged to find some one else.”

He spoke thus a little bit uneasily, because inwardly he wished her to stay, and if she did not he would be obliged to search for another. In the meanwhile there was a silence. The model became very pale, but after awhile she went quietly behind the screen.

Swirski began to move the easels toward the window and place them properly, in the meanwhile thinking:

“She will become accustomed, and in a week will laugh at her scruples.”

Then he placed a sofa, on which the model was to lie down, picked up his brushes and became impatient:

“Well, art thou ready?”

Silence.

“Decide! What a joke!”

From behind the screen was heard a voice vibrating with an entreating supplication.

“Panie!* I thought that— There is great misery in our house, but that way—I—can’t! If you would be so kind as to let me pose only for the head—even for three francs, even for two—if you would be so kind——”

And the words changed into a sobbing.

Swirski turned toward the screen, dropped his brushes and opened his mouth. He was astounded, because the model spoke in his own language.

* From “Pan:” lord.

“So you are a Polish lady?” said he finally, and he forgot that awhile before he had used “thou” in speaking to her.

“Yes, Panie! It is—my father was an Italian, but my grandfather was a Pole.”

There was silence again. Swirski regained his self-possession and said:

“Dress yourself again. You shall pose only for the head.”

But evidently she had not even begun to undress, because she came from behind the screen immediately, bashful and confused, full of fright and with traces of tears on her cheeks.

“Thank you, sir,” said she. “You are— You must excuse me, but——”

“Be quiet,” interrupted Swirski. “Here is a chair! be quiet. You will pose for the head— To the deuce! I did not wish to insult you. Do you see this picture? I needed a model to paint this figure. But as long as you can’t stand it,

that's different, especially when you are a Polish lady."

The tears began to flow again, but her blue eyes looked at him with gratitude; he found a bottle of wine, poured some into a glass, and handing it to her, said:

"You must drink. I have some crackers somewhere, but the deuce knows where they are. Pray be quiet."

Speaking thus, he looked at her with honest sympathy, then he said:

"Poor child!"

Then he put the easel in its former place, saying:

"You can't pose to-day; you are too excited. We shall begin to-morrow. Let us talk to-day. Who could suppose Maria Cervi to be a Polish lady? You said your grandfather was a Pole. Is he living?"

"He is living, but for two years has been unable to walk."

"What is his name?"

“Orysiewich,” answered she, pronouncing it with a foreign accent.

“I know the name. How long since he left the country?”

“Grandpa has not been in Poland for sixty-five years. He served in the Italian army, then in a bank in Nice.”

“How old is he?”

“Grandpa is ninety.”

“Your father’s name was Cervi?”

“Yes. Papa came from Nice, but he also served in the Italian army.”

“How long since he died?”

“Five years ago.”

“Is your mother living?”

“My mother is living. We live together in old Nice.”

“That’s right,” said Swirski. “One question more: Does your mother know that you wished to become a model?”

The girl answered hesitatingly:

“No. Mother doesn’t know it. Mme.

Lageat told me that in that way I could earn five francs a day, and as we are poor—very poor—therefore—I was obliged——”

Swirski with a quick glance took in the girl from her feet to the top of her head, and he knew she was speaking the truth. Everything spoke of poverty, from the hat and the old, worn-out, faded dress, of which one could see every thread of its texture, to the gloves, which were mended and grown red.

“You had better go home now,” said he, “and tell your mother that the painter Swirski wishes you to pose to him for a head. Tell her also that the painter will call at your house in order to beg her to accompany you to his studio when you come to pose, and that he will pay you ten francs a day.”

Panna Cervi thanked him with tears in her eyes. And he, noticing her confusion, said:

“I will be there within one hour. You look to be a very honest girl. You must trust me. I am a little bit of a bear, but I can understand many things. Aha! one thing! I will not give you money now, for you would be obliged to explain how you got it, but I will bring and advance to you what will be necessary. I have sometimes been hard up, and I know what a quick help means. Don’t thank me! Good-by, child—in an hour!”

Having asked her address, he conducted the girl downstairs. In an hour he took a carriage and told the coachman to drive him to old Nice. Everything that had happened seemed to him so strange that he could not think of anything else. In the meanwhile he was satisfied as an honest man is satisfied when he has acted as he ought to act toward himself and another who was deserving of kindness.

“If Panna Cervi is not a good and honest

girl," he thought, "then I am the biggest ass in the whole of Liguria."

But he did not admit that it was possible. On the contrary he was sure that he had met a very honest womanly soul, and he was pleased that this soul was placed in such a young and beautiful body.

Finally the carriage stopped before an old and weatherbeaten house. The house-keeper contemptuously showed Swirski to Pani Cervi's apartments.

"A home of misery!" thought the painter, mounting the dirty stairs.

He rapped at the door.

"Come in!" said a voice within. Swirski entered. He was welcomed by a woman about forty years old, dressed in black—thin, sad, evidently broken in health, but having nothing common in her manner. Beside her stood Panna Cervi.

"I know all about it, and I thank you

from my heart and soul!" said Pani Cervi.

"May God reward and bless you."

Speaking thus, she seized his hand and bent her head as if she wished to kiss it. But he withdrew it quickly, and then, wishing to break the solemnity of the moment, he turned toward Panna Maria, and, threatening her with his finger, said, with the freedom of an old friend:

"Aha! this young person told everything!" Panna Maria, instead of answering, smiled at him, a little bit sadly and with embarrassment. She seemed to him more beautiful than in the studio. He noticed also that she had around her neck a pink ribbon, which she had not had before. He was flattered, because it was a proof that she did not consider him an old man, and had dressed to please him.

In the meanwhile Pani Cervi said: "Yes, Maria told me everything. God watched

over her and over us, and He helped her to meet such a good man as you are."

To this Swirski said:

"Panna Maria spoke to me about the hardships in which you are living, but pray believe that it is a blessing, even in hard circumstances, to have such a daughter."

"Yes," quietly answered Pani Cervi.

"As for me, I am glad to have met you, because I was searching in vain. Now I am easy about my picture. Only I must assure myself about my model."

And speaking thus, he took three hundred francs from his pocketbook and begged of Pani Cervi to accept it, assuring her that he was doing a splendid business, and thanks to Panna Maria he would get lots of money for his picture. And then he expressed a desire to meet "grand-pa," because he was always fond of old soldiers.

Panna Maria rushed into the second room; after a moment the noise of a chair on wheels was heard, and the grandfather, whom they had dressed, in honor of the guest, in a uniform and all the decorations received in Italy, was drawn into the room.

Swirski then perceived the small and wrinkled face of an old man, with snow-white mustache and hair; he had blue, widely-opened eyes, resembling those of a child.

“Grandpa,” said Panna Maria, bending down so that the old man could see her lips, and speaking precisely, slowly and loudly, “it’s Pan Swirski, a countryman, an artist.”

The old man turned his blue eyes toward him, looked at him and repeated:

“Countryman? Yes! Countryman!”

Then he smiled, looked at his daughter and granddaughter, then again at Swirski; for awhile he was searching for words;

finally he asked, in old and trembling voice:

“And in the spring—what?”

Evidently he had some thought in his mind that he could not express. He bent his trembling head on the armchair, and looking at the window he smiled, repeating:

“Yes, yes! It will be!”

“He is always that way!” said Panna Maria.

Swirski looked at him with emotion and Pani Cervi began to talk about her father and husband. Both were in the war against Austria for the independence of Italy. They lived in Florence for some time, and returned to Nice only when Rome was taken. In Nice the younger comrade had married Orysiewich's daughter, and both got positions in a bank. Everything went smoothly, till a few years ago Cervi was killed in a railroad

accident, and Orysiewich lost his position on account of old age. Since that time their hardships began, because the only source for their living was a pension of six hundred lires paid to the old man by the Italian government. It was enough to preserve them from starvation, but not enough to live on. Both women earned something by sewing and teaching, but in the summer, when everything became quiet in Nice, and one could not earn anything, their small resources were soon exhausted. For two years the old man had not walked; he was sick, and being obliged to pay the doctor and buy medicine, they grew poorer and poorer.

Swirski while listening made two mental observations: In the first place, that Pani Cervi spoke Polish worse than her daughter. Evidently the old man, during the campaign, had not devoted as much time to his daughter as he did after-

ward to his granddaughter. But the other idea was more important to Swirski. He thought that this granddaughter, being such a beautiful girl, could in Nice, on that shore, on which every year were strolling many millionaires, get plenty of gold, keep carriages, servants, and have a boudoir upholstered with satin. But she wore an old dress, and a faded pink ribbon was her only luxury. There must be some force which preserved her from evil. "For this," Swirski said to himself, "two things are necessary: a pure nature and an honest bringing up. There is no doubt that I have met both."

And he felt at ease among these people. He noticed also that poverty had not rubbed out the traces of good breeding and of a certain refinement which comes from within and seems to be something natural. Both mother and daughter re-

ceived him as a providential guest, but in their words and mien one could still see a greater pleasure that they had met an honest man than because he had helped them.

It was possible that those three hundred francs spared the family many sorrows and humiliations, but he felt, just the same, that both women were more grateful to him that in the studio he had acted like a man with a good and tender heart who had understood the girl's grief, shame and sacrifice. But he was pleased most by noticing that in Panna Cervi's bashfulness, in her charming looks, there was that embarrassment which a girl only feels in the presence of a man toward whom she feels gratitude, and who in the meanwhile, according to Swirski's own expression, "is still in the circulation." He was forty-five years old, and notwithstanding a young heart, he began to doubt

himself; therefore that pink ribbon and his observation caused him real pleasure. And he talked to them with as much respect and attention as if they were ladies of the best society, and seeing this, they appreciated that he was pleased. He shook hands with both of them, and when Panna Maria, with drooping eyes, gave him the whole strength of her warm and young hand, he became a little bit dizzy, and his head was so filled with the pretty model that the coachman was obliged to ask him twice where he wished to go.

While in the carriage he was thinking that it would not be proper to paint Panna Maria's head on some other girl's body, and he tried to persuade himself that it would be better to cover the bust of the sleeping girl with a light drapery.

“When I return I will call any model; I will cover her and make such changes

that to-morrow they may find the thing ready," said he to himself.

Then he thought that he could not hire Panna Cervi forever, and he was sorry for it.

The carriage stopped before the studio. Swirski paid the driver and stepped out.

"There is a telegram for you, sir," said the housekeeper to him.

The painter awakened as from a dream.

"Aha!" said he; "very well! give it to me!"

And having taken the telegram from the housekeeper, he opened it impatiently. But as soon as he glanced at it astonishment and fright appeared on his face, because the telegram read as follows:

"Kresowicz killed himself an hour ago.
Come. HELENE."

CHAPTER VII.

WHEN Pani Elzen met Swirski her face looked confused and irritated; her eyes were dry but red, as if she had been crying; her manner was full of impatience.

"Have you received any letter?" she asked him hastily.

"No. I received only your telegram. What a misfortune!"

"I thought he had written to you."

"No. When did it happen?"

"This morning; they heard a shot in his room. The servants rushed in and found him dead."

"Here in the hotel?"

"No. Happily he went yesterday to Contamine."

“What is the cause of it?”

“How can I know?” she answered impatiently.

“Because as far as I know he did not gamble.”

“No. They found some money on him.”

“Was it yesterday that you dismissed him?”

“Yes, but he asked me to do it.”

“Perhaps he took it too seriously.”

“I don’t know,” she said feverishly. “If he wanted to kill himself he ought to have gone away. But he was a madman—that explains everything! Why did he not go away?”

Swirski looked at her attentively.

“Quiet yourself,” said he.

But she misunderstood him and said:

“Because it’s very unpleasant for me, and then there might be some trouble! Who knows if I will not be obliged to go to

court as a witness? How can I know? What a dreadful thing! And then there will be some gossip. First Wiadrowski! I wanted to ask you to tell among your friends that he gambled and had lost my money, and that was the reason for the suicide. If you think that it will be necessary to repeat it in court it will then be better not to speak about it, because it may come out that it is not true; but you can say it to the people. If he had gone at least to Mentona or to Nice! Then God knows whether he had written anything before his death in order to avenge himself on me. If some letter should fall into the hands of a newspaper man! One may expect anything from this kind of people. I wanted to leave Nice, but now I *must*."

Swirski looked more and more attentively on her troubled face with closed lips; finally he said:

“How horrid!”

“Yes, it *is* horrid!” answered Pani Elzen. “Would it not increase the gossip if we leave to-morrow?”

“I don’t think so,” said Swirski.

And he inquired about the hotel in which Kresowicz shot himself, and said that he would go there to get some news and arrange for the funeral.

But she wanted to stop him, so he said:

“Madam! he is not a dog, but a man, and it’s proper to bury him at least.”

“Somebody will bury him without you,” she answered.

Swirski took leave, however, and went out. On the stairs of the hotel he raised his hand to his forehead and repeated:

“How horrid!”

He knew by experience how far human egotism can go; he knew also that women in egotism as well as in self-denial overtop men; he recollected that he had already

met such types of womanhood, among whom, under the exterior coat of varnish, the rough, animal-like egotism was hidden—in whom all moral instinct ended where the personal interest began. Pani Elzen, however, was able to astonish him. “This unfortunate man,” said he to himself, “was an instructor of her children; he used to live with her under the same roof, and was in love with her. And she? Not a word of sympathy, of pity! Nothing and nothing! She is angry with him for the trouble he has caused her, that he did not go far from the city, that he has spoiled the season for her, that they will talk about her; but she never thought to ask what was the matter with him, why he killed himself, and had he not done it for her? And in her irritation she forgot that she had betrayed herself, and that, if not on account of good heart, at least on account of good sense, she ought to show

to me that she is better than that. Ah! what a spiritual barbarism! Appearances, appearances that is all, and under a French corset and the French accent the primitive nature of a true Zulu woman! Civilization applied to the skin like powder! Even she is cheeky enough to ask me to tell the people that he was gambling with her money. Pooh! May a thunderbolt strike all this business!"

Thus thinking and speaking, he reached Condamine and found the small hotel in which the suicide was committed. In Kresowicz's room he found a physician and a curt official, who were very glad he had come, because they expected he could give them some information about the dead man.

"He left a note," said the official, "asking to be buried in a common grave, and the money found with him to be sent to

Zurich to an address given by him. He has burned all papers."

Swirski looked at Kresowicz, who was lying on the bed with opened, frightened eyes.

"The dead man considered himself sick without any hope of recovery," said he; "that's probably the reason he has committed suicide. He never gambled."

Then he said everything he knew about Kresowicz, left money enough to purchase a separate grave, and went out.

While walking he recollected what Kresowicz said to him in Nice about microbes, also his answer given to Wiadrowski, that he had joined the society of "silent ones," and he convinced himself that the young student killed himself because he doubted if he could ever be cured.

But he understood also that some secondary reasons might be admitted, and

among them the unhappy love for Pani Elzen and his parting from her. These thoughts made him sad. Kresowicz's body, with the fright in his eyes, stood before him. He thought that nobody plunged into that fearful darkness without fright, that the whole life, compared with the necessity of death, was one of gigantic tragical nonsense, and he returned to Pani Elzen very low spirited.

She was relieved when she learned that Kresowicz had not left any papers. She said that she would send the money necessary for a decent funeral, and now talked about him with a certain pity. But she could not make Swirski stay with her. The painter announced that he must go home.

"But I shall see you at least in the evening?" said she, shaking hands with him. "I wanted to go to Nice toward evening, and go with you."

“Where?” asked Swirski, astonished.

“Have you forgotten? To the ball on board the Formidable.”

“Ah! you are then going to the ball?”

“If you only knew how difficult it is for me, especially after such an unpleasant accident, you would pity me, because, in fact, I am sorry for that poor young man. But I must do it, if only for the reason that people may not have cause for supposition.”

“So? Good-by!” said Swirski.

And a few moments afterward, sitting in the train, he said to himself:

“I will be a dead crab if I go with you to a ball on the Formidable or to any other ball.”

CHAPTER VIII.

BUT the next day his sadness had passed when Pani Cervi and Panna Maria came to his studio. Seeing the beautiful fresh face of the girl he became even joyful.

In the studio everything was ready; the easel was placed near the window, the sofa for the use of the model not far from it. Pani Lageat received the most precise order not to let anybody in, even if Queen Victoria herself should call.

Swirski drew the curtains and darkened the window in the ceiling, but while doing this he looked continually at his gracious model.

In the meanwhile the ladies took off their hats and Panna Maria asked:

“What shall I do now?”

“You must first let your hair fall,” said Swirski.

He approached her and she raised both hands to her head. It was apparent that his request made her uneasy, and that it seemed strange to her. And Swirski looked at her confused face, drooped eyes, bent figure, and the elegant lines of her hips, and thought that in this big pail of filth—Nice—he had discovered a true pearl.

After awhile her hair fell over her shoulders. Panna Maria shook her head to dishevel it, and it covered her completely.

“*Corpo Dio!*” exclaimed Swirski. The more difficult task was to pose the model. Swirski noticed that the girl’s heart beat quicker, that her breast heaved faster, and her cheeks burned as though she was obliged to fight against an instinctive

bashfulness, with an uneasiness similar to that which causes one an unknown pleasure.

Therefore he spoke to himself: "No! she is not a common model—she is quite different—and I am not looking at her simply as a painter would." In fact he was embarrassed, and his fingers trembled when he was placing her head on a cushion; but wishing to get rid of the agitation he began to talk jokingly:

"Keep quiet now! That way! One must do something for art. Now, that's well! How beautiful your profile looks on the red ground! If you could see it—but you can't! Don't smile—it's forbidden. You must sleep! I am going to paint immediately!"

And he began to work, but soon stopped and asked Pani Cervi about past times. He learned from her that Maria had had a very good position in the house of the

Countess Dziadzikiewich, *née* Atrament, daughter of a rich manufacturer from Lodz. But she dismissed her on learning that Maria's father and grandfather had served in the Italian army. It was very hard for them, because they both wished very much that Maria might become a reader with some lady living in Nice during the winter, as then they would not be obliged to separate.

In Swirski the painter awakened. He frowned, looked over the handle of the brush to the reclining girl, and painted diligently. From time to time he put aside the palette and brushes, approached the model and corrected the position of her head. Then he bent over her more than was necessary for the interest of art, and when he felt the warmth of her young body, when he looked on her long eyelashes and the slightly opened mouth, a shiver ran through his bones, his

fingers trembled nervously, and he spoke to himself inwardly:

“Keep up, old man! To the deuce! keep up!”

Surely he was very fond of her. Her embarrassment, her blushes, her modesty, coupled with a certain virginal coquettishness, made him happy. All this proved to him that she did not consider him an old man. He felt that she liked him also. Her grandfather surely had told her marvelous things about his countrymen, and maybe had excited her imagination.

She doubtless thought she had now met one of them—not a common one—honest, famous, who appeared to her as in a fairy tale, at the moment of greatest need, with help and kindness. How could she help feeling sympathy for him and looking at him with gratitude?

All these things made the time pass

very rapidly to Swirski, and he did not notice that it was already noontime. But at twelve o'clock Panna Maria said that they must go back, because they had left grandpa alone and that they must serve him his luncheon. Swirski asked them to come in the afternoon. If they did not wish to leave the old man alone perhaps they would ask some one to stay with him. Perhaps the housekeeper, or her husband, would do it. There is the question about the picture! Two sittings a day would be reciprocally useful. If there should be a necessity for paying somebody to watch the old man, he would consider it a favor if they would permit him to meet the expense, because, above all, he cared for the picture.

Two sittings a day for Panna Maria was very good business, and considering the misery in the house she could not refuse it. Therefore they agreed to come again

at two o'clock. Happy Swirski determined to conduct them home.

At the door of the house the house-keeper handed to Swirski a bunch of musk roses, telling him that they were brought by two lovely boys, and that they wished to enter the studio, but she did not let them in.

Swirski answered that she acted wisely, and he gave the roses to Panna Maria. In a few moments they were on the Promenade des Anglais. Nice seemed to Swirski to be prettier and more animated than ever. He enjoyed the noise, which before had always made him angry. They met Wiadrowski and De Sinten, who stopped, having noticed the artist. He saluted them and passed, but while passing he noticed that De Sinten put his monocle to his eye, looked at Panna Maria and exclaimed with astonishment: "*Prrristi!*" They both followed him for awhile, but

opposite the Jetée-Promenade Swirski took a carriage and conducted the ladies home.

The idea came to him to invite the whole family to a luncheon, but he thought there would be a bother with the old man, and that, considering their short acquaintance, such a sudden invitation might surprise Pani Cervi. Instead of that he promised himself that when the old man could get some one to take care of him, then, in order to save time, he would have luncheon served in the studio. After he left the ladies at the door he rushed to the first hotel he could see, and there he swallowed his luncheon without knowing what he was eating. Pani Elzen, Romulus and Remus, the bunches of musk roses passed in his mind. A few days ago the beautiful widow and his relation toward her were questions of great importance to him. He remembered well that inward fight he had undergone on the sea

coming back from Ville Franche. Now he said to himself: "It doesn't exist for me any more and I shall not think of it longer." And he did not feel the slightest uneasiness or smallest remorse. On the contrary, it seemed to him that some heavy burden had fallen from his shoulders. All his thoughts returned to Panna Maria. She was in his eyes and in his head; by the strength of imagination he saw her again with her disheveled hair, closed eyelids, and when he thought that in about an hour he would be able to touch her temples with his fingers, to bend again over her, and feel the warmth from her young body, he was as intoxicated as if he had drank wine, and he asked himself for the second time:

"Well, what will become of you, old man?"

But when he came back to his studio he found Pani Elzen's telegram: "I am ex-

pecting you at six o'clock for dinner." Swirski crumpled it and put it in his pocket, and when Pani Cervi came with her daughter he had forgotten about it so completely that, after having finished his work, toward five o'clock, he began to think where he should go to dine, and he was mad that he did not know what to do in the evening.

CHAPTER IX.

THE next day when Mme. Lageat brought the luncheon for three people she said that an hour before those two lovely boys were there again, but this time with an elegantly dressed lady.

“The young lady wanted to see you, but I told her you had gone to Antibes.”

“To Toulon! To Toulon!” answered the painter merrily.

But the next day Mme. Lageat could not communicate Swirski’s answer, because only a letter came. Swirski did not read it at all. Instead, it happened that day that, wishing to correct Panna Maria’s “position,” he put his hands under her shoulders and lifted her so that their breasts

touched and her breath bathed his face. She became very much confused, and he said to himself that if such a moment would only last long enough it would be worth while to give his life for it.

In the evening he spoke to himself thus:

“Your senses are working in you differently from what they did before, because this time your soul is with them, and all because she is a child who in this *pudri-dero* of Nice has remained pure. It's not her merit, but her nature, and where can a person find a similar one? This time I am not deceiving myself and don't persuade myself—the reality speaks.”

And it seemed to him that he had a sweet dream.

Two days afterward he received another dispatch, which was given to him in the presence of both ladies.

He opened it rather unwillingly, glanced at it, and his face expressed his confusion.

“You must excuse me, ladies,” he said after awhile, “I have received such news that I am obliged to be going immediately.”

“Nothing bad at least?” asked Pani Cervi solicitously.

“No! no! But it may be that I will not be able to be present for the afternoon sitting. At any rate it will be ended to-day, and to-morrow I will have peace.”

Having said this, he took leave of them a bit feverishly but cordially, and a few moments afterward he was sitting in the carriage on the road to Monte Carlo.

When he passed the Jetée-Promenade he pulled out the dispatch and read it again. It was as follows:

“I am waiting for you this afternoon. If you do not come by the four-o’clock train I know what I shall do.

“MORPHINE.”

He was afraid of this signature, for he

was under the influence of Kresowicz's recent suicide.

“Who knows,” said he to himself, “to what deed it may lead the woman—if not in her offended love, then in her offended selfishness? I ought not to act as I have acted. It was a very easy matter to answer the first letter—and to break with her. One mustn't play with anybody, no matter if he is good or bad. This time I will break with her, but I must do it now, and not wait till four o'clock.”

And he told the coachman to hasten. He tried to persuade himself that Pani Elzen would not make any attempt on her life. But there were moments when he doubted whether her monstrous egotism, if offended, would not push her to commit such a dreadful deed.

He remembered that in her character there was a certain stubbornness, a certain determination and courage. It is true

that the thought of the children ought to stop her, but will it stop her? Does she really care about those children? And thinking what might happen, his hair stood up on end. His conscience began to trouble him again and a new fight commenced within him. Panna Maria's picture passed before his eyes continually, arousing bitter sorrow.

"It is true," he repeated to himself, "that I am going to break my engagement, but I feel a great uneasiness. What shall I do if this bad, vain and revengeful woman should say to me, 'You or morphine?'"

And in the meanwhile, aside from uneasiness and uncertainty, a disgust seized him, because it seemed to him that the question put in that way would be worthy of some false heroine belonging to "bad literature."

But what would it be if she should put

it that way? In society, especially in Nice, there are many women who belong to "bad literature."

Amid these thoughts and amid the clouds of gray dust he arrived at last at Monte Carlo and told the coachman to stop at the Hotel de Paris. But before he could alight he perceived on the green-sward Romulus and Remus playing ball. They rushed toward him.

"Good-morning, sir!"

"Good-morning!"

"Good-morning! Is your mother in her room?"

"No. *Maman* went on horseback with Monsieur de Sinten."

There was a silence.

"Ah! mamma went with Monsieur de Sinten!" repeated Swirski. "Very well!"

After awhile he added:

"It's true! She did not expect me till four o'clock!"

Suddenly he began to laugh:

“The drama is ended by a farce. I have forgotten—we are on the Riviera! What an ass I am!”

“Will you wait for *maman*?” asked Romulus.

“No. Boys, listen: Tell your mother that I came to bid her good-by, and that I am sorry I did not see her, because to-day I am going away.”

And he told the coachman to return to Nice.

In the evening he received a telegram with only one word in it—“Villain.”

When he read it, it made him merry, because it was not signed “Morphine.”

CHAPTER X.

Two weeks after the picture representing "Sleep and Death" was finished Swirski began another, which he called "Euterpe." But he could not work. He complained that the light was too sharp, and, instead of painting, looked at the beautiful Panna Maria's face, as if he was searching for Euterpe's expression. He looked at her so intently that under the influence of his looks Panna Maria blushed, and he became more and more uneasy. Finally one morning he said suddenly, with strange, changed voice:

"I notice one thing—that you both love Italy very much."

"We and grandpa also!" answered Panna Maria.

“And I also. Half of my life I spent in Florence and in Rome. There the light is not so sharp, and one may paint all day long. Yes! Who could not love Italy? Do you know about what I am thinking sometimes?”

Panna Maria bent her head and looked at him attentively, as was her custom when she was listening to him.

“I think that every man has two fatherlands: one his own, and the other—Italy. Because all culture, and all art, and all knowledge—everything comes from there. Let us take renaissance. Truly! Everybody is a child, or at least grandchild of Italy.”

“Yes,” answered Panna Maria.

He spoke further:

“I don’t remember whether I told you that I have a studio in Rome, on the Via Marghetti, and since the light has become so sharp here, I long for my studio.

How lovely it would be if we could go to Rome! Afterward we would go to Warsaw."

"It's impossible!" answered Panna Maria with a sad smile.

He approached her suddenly, and taking hold of both her hands, spoke, looking into her eyes with a great tenderness:

"Yes, it's possible, my dearest! Don't you guess how?"

And when she became pale he pressed her hands to his breast and added:

"Give me yourself!"

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